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April 1, 2003

\* Revised \*

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.   
Director of Health Services and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.   
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

**SUBJECT: SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME- UPDATE**

This is to provide you with an update regarding Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Los Angeles County. Our last update was provided on March 25, 2003.

**Background**

SARS is a respiratory illness whose cause has not been definitely established but may be related to coronavirus. Two coronaviruses that are known to infect humans cause one-third of common colds. Symptoms and signs of SARS include a fever greater than or equal to 38 degrees Celsius (100.5 degrees Fahrenheit) and cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing.

Additional cases of SARS continue to be identified in the United States, Canada and abroad. As of March 31, 2003 1,622 cases of SARS has been identified worldwide including 69 in the United States. Fifty-eight deaths have been associated with SARS worldwide. To date there have been no deaths in the United States associated with SARS.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently expanded its travel advisory to Singapore and all parts of China. The case definition has also been expanded to include:

- Documented fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $100.5^{\circ}\text{F}$ );
- AND one or more signs or symptoms of respiratory illness including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or abnormal chest x-ray;
- AND one or more of the following:
  - History of travel to Hong Kong; the People's Republic of China; Hanoi, Vietnam; or

- Singapore, within ten days of symptom onset;
- Close contact with persons with respiratory illness having the above travel history. Close contact includes having cared for, having lived with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with SARS.

### **SARS in Los Angeles County**

To date Los Angeles County has reported seven instances of illness to the CDC meeting the case definition for SARS.

- Six of the seven individuals meeting the case definition have a history of travel to at least one of the affected areas. The remaining case occurred in a child whose parent had traveled.
- Five of the seven cases have fully recovered.
- One person remains hospitalized in good condition.
- To date all laboratory specimens sent to the CDC for analysis have been negative for both viral and bacterial pathogens.

Physicians in the Department's Acute Communicable Disease Control Program continue to receive and follow-up on calls from both the public and medical community during the day and after-hours. In addition the Department maintains daily communication with the California Department of Health Services and the CDC.

### **Update on SARS Surveillance and Awareness Activities**

Current activities to continue to alert the medical community and the public include:

- The Department continues to alert 911 receiving hospitals and physicians in Los Angeles County regarding SARS including advising them of updated case definitions, and appropriate triage and the isolation procedures to help reduce SARS transmission using the HASTEN and REDDINET alert systems. Physicians are encouraged to report suspected cases of SARS to the Department's Acute Communicable Disease Control Program and to implement appropriate isolation and infection control procedures.  
Work continues with CDC quarantine authorities to increase level of awareness of SARS at LAX and the port and to alert and help identify any passengers who may be experiencing this combination of symptoms.  
Press releases will be issued periodically to update the public and health care providers on the latest local information on SARS. The Department continues to provide information via television, radio and print coverage of SARS to direct individuals to sources of additional information and emphasizing that recent travel to affected areas was required in order to meet the case definition for SARS.  
Updated information has been provided to the Department's Health Information Hotline to assist hotline staff in responding to calls from the public regarding SARS.
- The Department continues to post information for the public and clinicians regarding SARS on its website [www.lapublichealth.org/acd/sars.htm](http://www.lapublichealth.org/acd/sars.htm) and maintains links to the most recent CDC and WHO information.

In addition to these activities, ACDC staff will be participating in a variety of epidemiologic and surveillance studies being conducted by the CDC to increase the body of information available on SARS. These studies will include extensive interviews with individuals meeting the SARS case definition, follow-up with recent travelers from specific areas where large numbers of cases have been reported, and follow-up with health care workers who cared for persons with SARS.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let either of us know.

TLG:JEF:al

tgjSARS040103 mem update revised

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors